
Health Care Committee

HB 1494

Brief Description: Improving the delivery of health care services to school children.

Sponsors: Representatives Morrell, Clibborn, Green, Kessler, Cody, Appleton, Darneille, Williams, Campbell, Lovick, Simpson, Hunt, Chase, Wood, Sells, Roberts, Kenney, McIntire, Hasegawa, Santos, Moeller and Schual-Berke.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Until December 31, 2008, requires a ratio of one school nurse for every 2,000 full-time students in class I school districts, beginning in the 2006-07 school year. The ratio increases to one school nurse for every 1,500 full-time students for the 2008-09 school year.
- Creates a School Nurse Account to support the proposed school nurse-to-student ratio.
- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to report by December 31, 2008, on the impact of implementing the school nurse-to-student ratios.

Hearing Date: 2/11/05

Staff: Molly Belozer (786-7104).

Background:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services includes, in "Healthy People 2010," a goal of a school nurse-to-student ratio of 1:750. A 1997 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee report found, in response to a survey, an average ratio of one full-time equivalent (FTE) registered nurse for every 1,713 FTE students among Washington school districts.

In 2000, the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction developed the "School District Model for Delivery of Health Services." The model for districtwide staffing for health services recommends one professional school nurse for every 1,500 regular education students.

In Washington, every school nurse must be certified as an educational staff associate (ESA). The State Board of Education certifies school nurses as ESAs. To attain initial certification as a school nurse under Board of Education rules, a candidate must:

1. hold a valid registered nurse license from Washington;

2. hold a baccalaureate degree or higher in nursing from an accredited program; and
3. complete 30 clock hours or 3 quarter hours of Board of Education-approved course work.

For continuing certification, school nurse candidates must provide documentation of 180 days of employment and have completed 45 quarter hours of post-baccalaureate course work.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning with the 2006-07 school year, each school district with over 2,000 full-time equivalent students (class I school districts) must maintain a ratio of at least one school nurse for every 2,000 full-time students. For the 2008-09 school year, the ratio must increase to at least one school nurse for every 1,500 full-time students.

The Board of Education must adopt rules for the initial and continuing certification of certified school nurses. All school nurses in class I school districts must apply for certification within one year of the bill's effective date; however, no change is made for school nurses in class II school districts (school districts with less than 2,000 full-time equivalent students).

A School Nurse Account (Account) is created to support the proposed ratio of school nurses-to-students. The Account is funded with receipts from gifts, grants, or endowments received by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction from public or private sources.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction must report to the Legislature by December 31, 2008, on (1) the impact of implementing the school nurse-to-student ratios, and (2) recommendations about whether the funding for school nurses should be an ongoing responsibility of the state and part of basic education.

These provisions expire December 31, 2008.

Appropriation: The sum of \$... to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.